

Town of



# AMHERST *Massachusetts*

Office of the Town Manager  
Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002

Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager  
Phone: (413) 259-3002  
Fax: (413) 259-2405  
Email: [townmanager@amherstma.gov](mailto:townmanager@amherstma.gov)

To: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Chair, Amherst Select Board  
Members of the Amherst Select Board

From: Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager

Re: Town Manager Performance Goals – 2010 – Progress Report

Date: April 21, 2010

Please allow this memo to serve as a progress report in response to the FY10 Town Manager Performance Goals adopted by the Select Board on September 14, 2009.

The goals and my accomplishments are listed below:

- 1. The Town Manager shall develop specific recommendations for consideration by the Select Board to address the revenue crisis, including the generation of new revenue; reducing expenses through efficiencies in Town structure and service delivery; negotiating contracts through the collective bargaining process that are reflective of the community's capability and willingness to support; and pursuit of an increased economic development profile to increase the tax base and reduce the burden on residential property taxpayers.*

My performance has included the crafting and delivery of the proposed FY2011 budget within the parameters established by the Select Board and the Finance Committee. It was innovative and sensitive to the needs of the community. I successfully negotiated collective bargaining agreements that led to great savings. I created the concept of the Gateway Redevelopment District and began the process of bringing the goal to increase the tax base to fruition. I executed the pre-option agreement with the Patterson family to begin the process of bringing a significant corporate tax payer to North Amherst. I encouraged and promoted the Boltwood/Judie's mixed use project with the developers.

2. *The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges, and to actively engage community groups.*

I have created a partnership with the University to bring development to the Gateway Redevelopment District utilizing, in part, the property owned by the University and located on North Pleasant Street, that was previously owned by fraternities. I have worked closely with Amherst College to encourage it to move forward with the Lord Jeffery Inn project and to ensure that the regulatory process was completed comprehensively and expeditiously. I continue to work closely with the Promoting Downtown Business organization and the University and Amherst College on moving forward with the creation of the Business Improvement District. I continue to participate as a presenter, volunteer and participate in many community programs to include a weekly radio show, presentations before the Rotary, Amherst Club, 250<sup>th</sup> Educational series, Town Manager blog and any other venue that gives me the opportunity to meet and talk to members of the Amherst community.

3. *The Town Manager shall assess the state of morale among staff, the Town's most valuable resource. The Town Manager shall develop and implement a plan to improve morale, which shall include more effective communication as one of its components; and shall keep the Select Board informed about this work and its progress.*

The morale of Town employees is generally positive and with the recent approval by the citizens of Amherst of the override, the negative effect of position elimination has been abated. I have established a series of employee meetings to discuss the proposed FY2011 budget with all employee groups. Each group has had at least two meetings with me in preparation for the FY2011 budget. I have invited employees at every opportunity to provide insight and suggestions as to measures that might be taken to improve morale. I have met with individual employees whose positions were slated for elimination to apprise and to plan for the potential of a reduction in force. I have worked closely with the Personnel Board to assess the conditions of employment for non union employees and to make changes to the benefit of non union employees and the town. I have apprised the Select Board of my activities within the framework of this goal.

4. *The Town Manager shall assess the functioning of the Human Resource Department and the Town's Human Resources needs. The Town Manager shall inform the Select Board of his findings, and his plans to ensure that the organization's needs are fully met.*

I shall report to the Select Board on the functioning of the Human Resource Department and the town's human resource needs. Generally, I have been pleased with the progress made in 2009-2010. The process to recruit and select two new public safety chiefs produced two excellent hires. The process was virtually flawless and produced exceptional results without the hiring of an outside agency.



5. *The Town Manager shall continue to work closely with the Select Board by helping the Select Board to become more informed; responding to and initiating improved communication efforts; allowing the Select Board more opportunity to provide feedback on policy/practice initiatives and changes before implementation; and involving the Select Board in the collective bargaining process.*

The Town Manager portion of each Select Board meeting allows me the opportunity to apprise the Select Board of initiatives and policy opportunities. I also worked closely with the Select Board to inform it of items of significance between Select Board meetings. I have met with the Select Board in executive session to discuss collective bargaining negotiating strategies.

6. *The Town Manager shall create a workplace culture of receptivity to new ideas, in which staff at all levels are expected and encouraged to offer suggestions for improving the efficiency of service provision and resource utilization within and across departments. The Town Manager shall inform the Select Board about the variety of ways such suggestions are being encouraged, collected, considered and implemented. These will include specific mechanisms for feedback collection, as well as how the philosophy and message of encouraging feedback is being communicated to staff.*

I created and implemented the IDEA Program in 2009 and recently announced the winners of the contest designed to bring a formal structure to the process of developing and implementing concepts with the potential to increase organizational efficiency and effectiveness. That program was introduced at all the employee meetings and further defined in a memo to all town employees. An evaluation team of senior employees was created to consider and rank the proposals and the winners were identified, rewarded and acknowledged for their wonderful contributions.

7. *The Town Manager shall continue to efforts to research and propose ways to collect "customer satisfaction" feedback and suggestions from the public, regarding interactions with staff and departments, and the process for obtaining services and assistance.*

I have been proactive in developing a culture of receptivity to concepts that address stated user concerns for the building inspection process. Two efforts to fast track the regulatory process without sacrificing the importance of regulatory oversight were completed this year with the Lord Jeffery Inn project and the Boltwood Walk project. Both efforts involved putting together teams of key individuals together to plan and shape the project plans in order to ensure expeditious completion of the regulatory process. The suggestion box in the lobby of Town Hall continues to be a source of information on the needs and wishes of the people we serve. Finally, the successful override vote, in my view, is a comprehensive endorsement of the satisfaction the citizens have in the performance of local government.

8. *The Town Manager shall assess Town owned buildings regarding their current use, and anticipated future benefits and liability. He will make recommendations on whether or not it is in the town's best interest to maintain ownership of each one. If any recommendations are to not maintain ownership, he will suggest how best to proceed.*

This effort has been started but is not yet complete. However, I have been clear that there is a need for a new fire headquarters building to be located in a location other than the current downtown facility and that the present fire station building, once a new headquarters has been constructed and occupied, should be transitioned for the development of additional tax base.

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the Select Board's goals for the Town Manager for the FY 2010.